ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING AT THE DOAK SITE (40GN257): THE 2005 SEASON

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Tusculum College
Department of Museum Program and Studies
Greeneville, Tennessee

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Introduction

In May and June of 2005, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) Archaeological Field School carried out secondary testing excavations at the Doak Site (40GN257), located on the campus of Tusculum College in Greeneville, Tennessee (Figure 1). The purpose of this project was to follow up on previous research completed in 2003 and 2004, as outlined in site reports, papers, and a journal publication (Honerkamp 2003, 2004, 2005). This literature describes a phased survey and testing program at the site of the extant plantation home of Samuel Witherspoon Doak. Built about 1830, his substantial two-story brick manor, adhering to a modified Georgian style, dominated the local landscape in the early 19th century (Figure 2). Other structures associated with the main house included the Academy (a small frame building where classes were taught as early as 1835; Doughty 1975:174-175), a large barn, and a springhouse.

Doak was a successful planter, land speculator, minister, father of 13 children, and educator who established an early college in Greene County that eventually merged with Greeneville College in 1868 to become Tusculum College (Fuhrmann 1986:43-54; 60-63). The plantation house was owned by his descendents until the mid 1970s, when it was donated to the College. For the last several years it has served as the focal point for the Tusculum College Department of Museum Program and Studies, and currently hosts several thousand school students every year as part of its educational mission. With this success came plans for expansion of the Museum's parking lot, upgrading underground utilities, and other land-altering activities, thus necessitating the survey and testing program by UTC in 2003 and 2004. As in previous years, the 2005 Field School was supported by a grant by Tusculum College to cover field and laboratory expenses, student housing, and a small student stipend. Equipment for the project was donated by the UTC Jeffrey L. Brown Institute of Archaeology. Seven students participated in the 2005 excavations under the direction of the author. Of the three and one-half weeks devoted to fieldwork, approximately two days were rained out; artifact cleaning occurred during this time.

Site Background

The large size of the Doak manor is the first thing a visitor notices at the site, and it deserves discussion. Samuel W. Doak was unique for his time and place in that he was a successful planter and businessman in the antebellum South who did *not* possess slaves, relying instead on hired labor. However, he owned over 400 acres of land, and it is often the case, then and now, that those who achieve economic success build impressive homes. Whatever the symbolic social and economic import of the Doak manor, it also functioned on a more prosaic level. This is confirmed by the rapid addition (probably only a year or two after the original construction in 1830) of the attached ell on the east end of the house, which certainly broke the semi-symmetrical plan of the semi-Georgian architectural style of the original manor. A common motive attributed to Doak for constructing such a hefty edifice and then quickly adding to it is that space was required for his 13 children (11 survived into adulthood). However, those children appeared over 29 years of childbearing by his wife Sarah, and it is unlikely that the Doaks actually *planned* on such a prodigious number of offspring. The extensive size of the house was more likely originally intended to accommodate the anticipated abundance of students that were expected to attend the college.

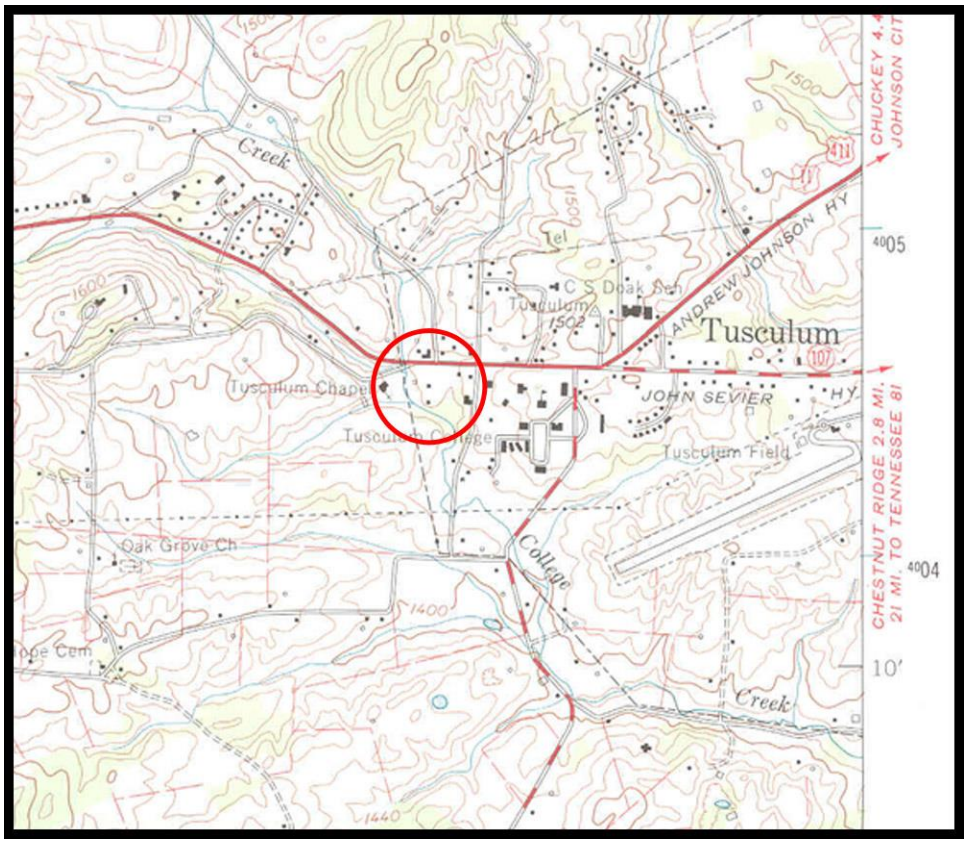

Figure 1. 40GN257 Vicinity Map. (1961 USGS Greeneville, TENN 181 – NE Quadrangle)

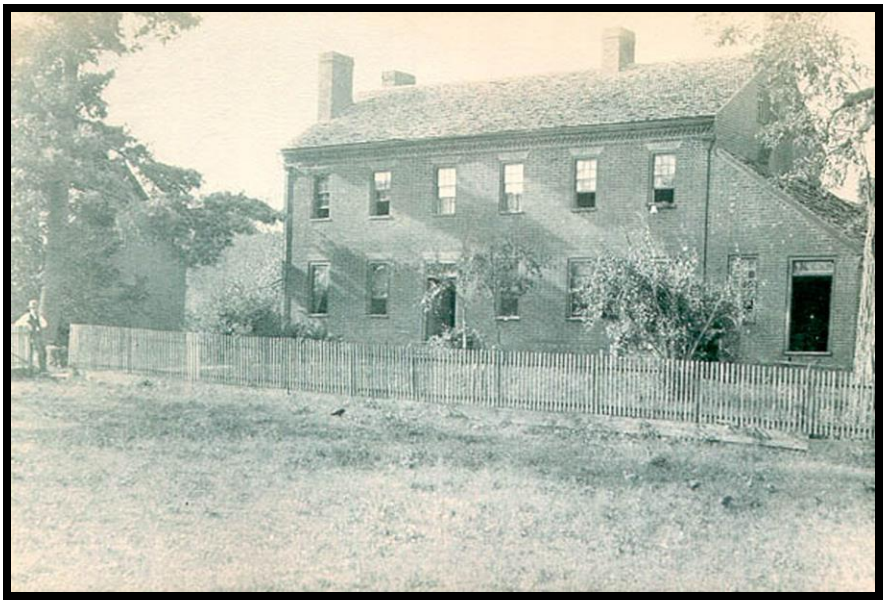

Figure 2. **Doak House and Barn, facing northwest, c. 1900.** The added ell appears on the right.

Apparently the ell was originally devoted primarily to a cooking and dining function, as evidence by its impressive walk-in fireplace. Even with 13 children, such a structure is overkill for purely familial needs. While Doak had but four students in 1835, enrollment had expanded to 70 by 1840, and he was billing students for board in addition to tuition (Fuhrmann 1986:45). Hence, the ell probably served as a kitchen/dining room for the large influx of students that appeared in the late 1830s.

Fuhrmann also mentions (p. 48) that students boarded with local families or else lived in "shacks or cabins that were the forerunner of the first dormitories" that began to be constructed in 1892. Such an early "shack or cabin" is probably what was discovered adjacent to the present Academy during the 2004 fieldwork (Honerkamp 2005). It will be referred to as a dormitory in this report.

Thus, the formation of the archaeological record at the Doak Site can be seen to result from a complex set of factors. Besides an ever-growing family immediately following construction of the manor, refuse deposits have surely resulted from a fluctuating number of early Tusculum students—all of them male—and this includes the vicinity of the main house as well as the Academy and dormitory areas. None of the Doak Site refuse is attributed to slaves. Such demographic factors must be taken into account when interpreting the archaeological remains at this site.

Previous Research

During the initial 2003 investigation, several areas of archaeological interest were identified for testing. After establishing a metric grid across the site, a systematic survey composed of 29 half meter screened survey units was completed. This resulted in the discovery of several subsurface features as well as the presence of some heavy artifact deposits. Five backhoe and hand-excavated trenches were dug to search for roads and fence lines, and to uncover a "missing" portion of the ell. No evidence of roads was noted, but postholes to fence lines and structural foundations were discovered. Several test units measuring 1 x 2 and 2 x 2 meters were dug to follow up on the survey results, followed by additional excavations during the 2004 field season that were focused on two specific areas of the site: in front (south) of the manor, a suspected basement to an early brick structure was tested, and west of the Academy, where the footprint of a brick structural foundation was investigated (Honerkamp 2004, 2005). Figure 3 illustrates the plan of excavations for the 2003, 2004, and 2005 field seasons.

The basement feature was over a meter deep and contained very few artifacts in the lower 90 cm of the feature fill, along with a vast amount of brick debris and limestone foundation stone fragments in a clay matrix (Figure 4). This fill was carefully screened using ¼ inch mesh to ensure an accurate artifact sample; the nails, window glass fragments, and three sherds were consistent with a deposition during the first half of the 19th century. No definitive edge to this feature was found, although the uneven floor of the features sloped up to 60 cm below surface on the north. Since the presumed brick structure associated with the basement was located directly in front of the 1830 Doak manor, it must have been constructed before the manor: putting up a building after the manor was already built makes no sense. Continued testing of this enigmatic feature was a goal of the 2005 fieldwork.

Remains of a brick foundation structure adjacent to and west of the present Academy were uncovered in a backhoe test trench. Although much of the foundation had been robbed, the associated builder's and robber's trenches were identified, along with the base of a double fireplace at the center of the building (Figure 5). The overall size of this structure was eventually determined to be 15 x 30 feet. Over 500 sherds were found in the four 2 x 2 meter test units that were excavated to sterile. While the possibility exists that this structure was the original Academy, the large number of domestic artifacts associated with it indicated that more than educational instruction occurred there.

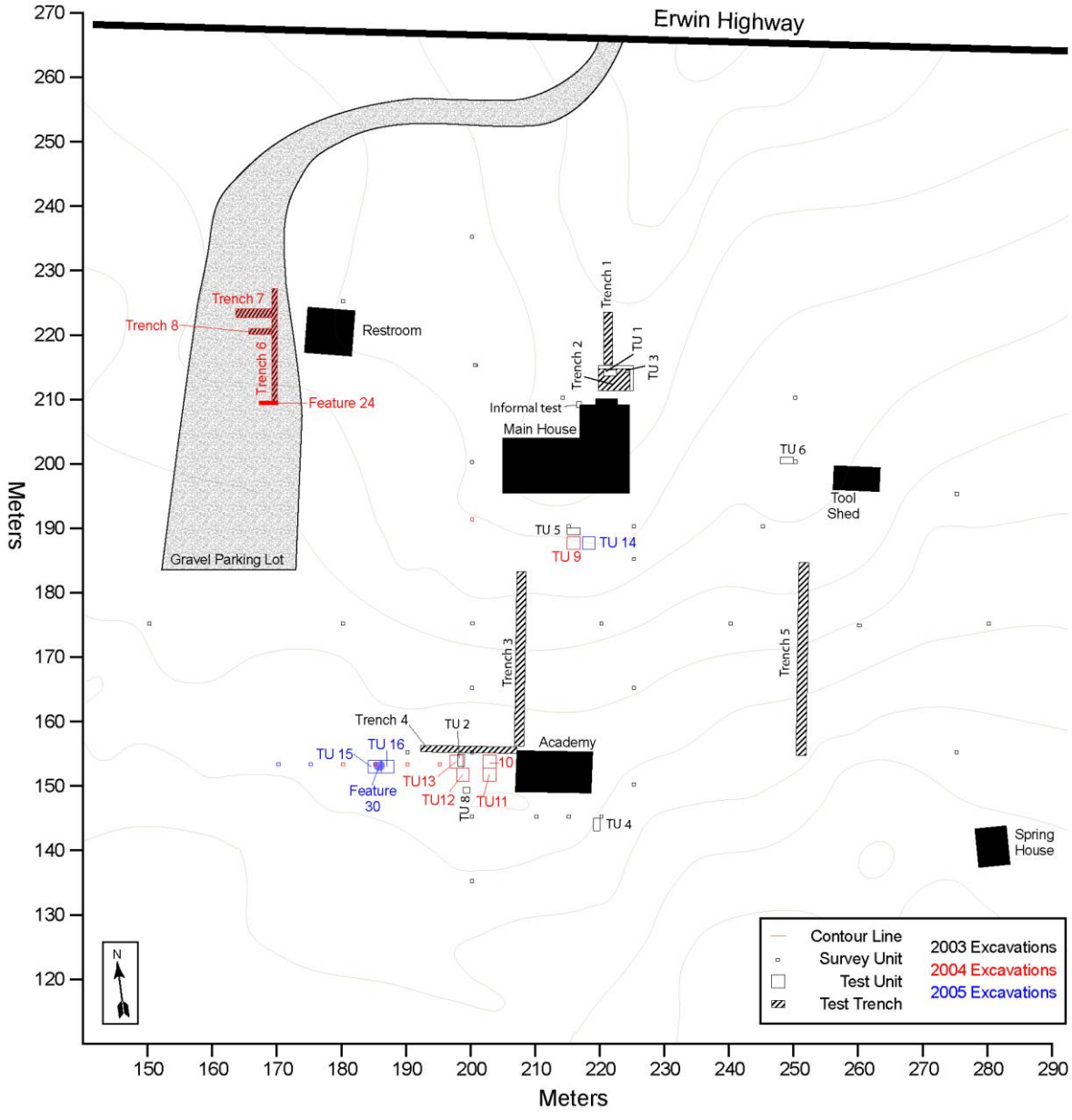

Figure 3. Plan of Excavations at 40GN270.

Figure 4. East Profile of TU 9. The compact nature of the brick rubble in the cellar fill is evident in this profile. A PVC utility pipe appears in the foreground, while a charcoal deposit is present in the northeast corner. The stone in the southeast corner is natural. Scales = 50 cm.

The hefty number of ceramics also supports a residential function (dormitory) for this feature.

At the end of the 2004 field session, four survey units were placed at 5-meter intervals west of the dormitory foundations. While few artifacts were present, one of the survey units revealed a layer of brickbats at the bottom of the plow zone. Time constraints prevented further excavation in this area, which was deferred until 2005. The rest of this report presents the results of the 2005 field season.

Figure 5. The Double Fireplace Foundation Adjacent to the Academy. It is connected to the north wall foundation that appears in the upper left corner. Facing northeast.

2005 Testing Results

Based on the results outlined above, the 2005 field season concentrated on two research goals: definition of the suspected cellar in front of the main house and delineating the brick deposit west of the dormitory. A 2 x 2 meter test unit designated as TU 14 was excavated in the basement, and two 2 x 2 meter test units labeled as TU 15 and TU 16 were dug west of the dormitory (Figure 5).

TU 14. In order to correctly orient the 2005 excavations with those from 2004, the northwest corner of the earlier 2 x 2 (TU 9) was measured with a total station and then ground truthed by removing sod. Once the edges of TU 9 were defined, another 2 x 2 was laid out 30 cm to the east of the earlier unit's east wall. As was the case in the previous year, excavation of the new test unit took the entire field season, despite doubling up of the crew at this single location for several days. Besides the difficulty associated with simply excavating clay and brick rubble, not to mention screening it through quarter inch mesh, TU 14 was taken down in 5 cm levels, and this slowed the excavation process somewhat (all other test units at the site have been excavated in 10 cm levels). This more fine-grained approach was initiated to achieve closer stratigraphic control in the unit so as to better distinguish the interface between modern and earlier artifacts.

As seen in Figures 6, 7, and 8, excavation of TU 14 revealed a deep feature with a fairly even floor that sloped downward to the south. This was similar to the form of the same depression in the east profile of the adjacent TU 9 to the west, but the fill in the earlier unit contained a much heavier concentration of brick debris in addition to the usual clay, brick rubble, and scattered limestone foundation stones (see Figure 4). The bottom of the presumed basement feature in TU 14 was 1.03 meters below surface on the south and 42 cm on the north. At this level, a distinct lens of charcoal is apparent in much of the west profile (Figures 7 and 8) as well as the west half of the south profile (Figure 6); it did not appear in the east or north profiles.

Figure 6. South Profile of TU 14. Scales = 50 cm.

Figure 7. West Profile of TU 14. Scales = 50 cm.

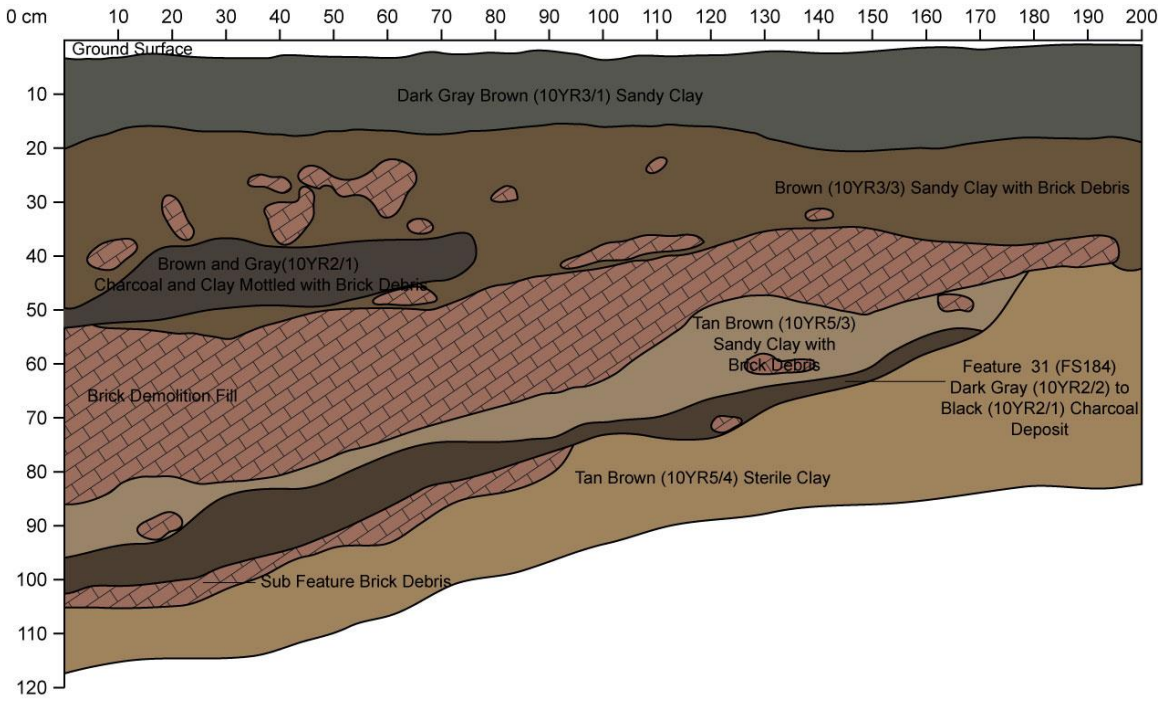

Figure 8. Stratigraphic Record of TU 14 West Profile.

A small deposit of charcoal also appeared in the lower northeast corner of TU 9, and it clearly is part of the same deposit (Honerkamp 2004:9). Charcoal was also noted in the form of a lens at the bottom of the east profile in the original 1 x 2 m test unit (TU 5), which was located

directly north of TU 9 (Honerkamp 2003:16). When the charcoal lens was excavated and screened in TU 14, it produced 30 machine cut nails and two small flint chips, and apparently represents a burned floor or wall section that collapsed (or was purposefully deposited) into the bottom of the cellar depression. Since the charcoal deposit barely extends into TU 9 and appears in only about half of TU 14 (see Figure 6), its limited extent suggests that a major conflagration did not *initiate* the filling of the cellar, although a fire within the associated structure as part of the demolition process is possible. The presence of nails in the lens would definitely preclude the possibility of a fireplace-cleaning deposit. A more definitive explanation of this deposit awaits the identification of the nature and extent of the presumed cellar. What can be stated with some assurance is that this basement did not serve as a trash pit when it was filled initially. A consistent characteristic of artifact distribution in this feature is seen in the presence of most of the domestic artifacts in the upper portion of the fill. In fact, only a single small sherd occurred lower than Level 5, or approximately 25 cm below surface. The single exception consisted of a fragment of lead glazed earthenware in Level 10, but due to the extended temporal range for this type, a useable *terminus post quem* for the lower basement fill cannot be derived from it. Only two sherds were present in Level 5, a hand painted polychrome whiteware sherd in Level 10 and a fragment of plain pearlware. This restricted ceramic distribution once again emphasizes the "clean" nature of the basement fill, which consisted almost entirely of brick debris, not domestic refuse. As with TU 5 and TU 9, ceramics were almost exclusively confined to upper sections of the basement fill in TU 14. This probably indicates that while the original fill event of the basement with demolition materials did not include domestic trash, a depression may have been "topped off" with household refuse. Of the total of 123 sherds that are associated with TU 14, a Mean Ceramic Date (MCD) of 1844.6 was generated from 79 applicable sherds (South 1980). This is only one year earlier than the MCD calculated for 62 sherds in TU 9. Artifact group frequencies for TU 5, 9, and 14 are presented in Table 1.

In TU 9, more modern artifacts such as wire nails seemed to be confined to the two uppermost 10-cm levels of the basement fill (Honerkamp 2004:9). Excavating with 5 cm levels in TU 14 confirmed and refined this observation: plastic fragments, a .22 shell casing, and wire nails (n=13) occurred in the top 15 centimeters of the unit, i.e., in Levels 1 through 3. According to Adams (2002), wire nails begin to be commonly used in the mid-1880s, which establishes a *terminus post quem* for at least the first 15 centimeters for this later portion of the fill (the even later plastic was associated with Level 2). The dearth of these kinds of modern artifacts in lower levels is a consistent stratigraphic fact in three excavations units (10 square meters of area excavated) in the main house area.

As with the previous units, a large quantity of lithic artifacts was recovered in TU 14. That the 690 fragments are probably associated with prehistoric flint knapping is suggested by the presence of one whole and two partial projectile points (Figure 9), as well as 4 utilized flakes. The two point bases appear to be St. Albans Side Notched, which date to the Early Archaic, or around 6700 B.C. (Chapman 1985:39). The complete point is similar to a Brewerton Side Notched, which has a Middle Archaic association. For the debitage, 392 of the 683 fragments (57.4%) exhibit the presence of cortex, indicating that primary reduction had taken place. Fine retouch was also common, however, resulting in the occurrence of very small fragments: the mean weight in grams of the noncortex debitage was 0.73 grams, compared to the 1.57 grams for cortex-bearing fragments. The fill in the cellar area that was sampled over three field seasons was consistently high in flint artifacts, with the total frequencies in Test Units 5, 9, and 14 calculated as 117.0, 134.8, and 172.5 per square meter, respectively. That the two Early

Figure 9. Projectile Points From TU 14. Top, Brewerton Side Notched, FS 158; bottom, St. Albans Corner Notched, FS 179, FS158.

Archaic points were separated by about 65 cm of fill strongly suggests that the flint assemblage in TU 14 is redeposited.

Although TU 14 contained no historic ceramics below 25 cm from the surface, a small assemblage of nonceramic artifacts was recovered in the lower strata. Several clothing items, illustrated in Figure 10, include two brass buttons and two small buckle tongue fragments. The button marked "PLATED" is from Level 6, while the smaller example was recovered from Level 10. Also found in Level 6 was the small buckle tongue on the bottom left of Figure 10; the one on the right is from Level 15. Personal items are shown in Figure 11 and include a broken slate pencil (Level 10), a marble made of limestone (Level 11), and most personal of all, the crown of a human molar (Level 3). This last item is unusual not only by its inexplicable presence in the upper fill of the basement, but also because it appears to be an adult molar that lacks an associated root structure, according to forensic anthropologist Thomas Bodkin of the Hamilton County (Tennessee) Medical Examiner's Office. It is probably the first or second molar of either a maxilla or mandible; it is not the third molar. It exhibits bad decay and there are wear facets from not only chewing but also on the side. The missing root seems to suggest a deciduous tooth, or possibly the result of trauma to the crown of an adult tooth, but the enamel would have been expected to have fractured or shattered if subjected to blunt force, and some root structure should still be adhering to the crown. At any rate, this artifact surely qualifies as the most unanticipated and odd of any found at the Doak Site. How it came to rest in this context is anyone's guess. Perhaps DNA analysis can establish if this tooth is—or is not—associated with the Doak family line, but in either case its presence in TU 14 constitutes a mysterious and enduring enigma. While it is common for archaeological reports to conclude that "further excavation is needed" in order to address certain research questions, it is difficult to imagine how this might be the case in this particular instance—unless there is a yet-to-be-discovered skeleton to accompany the tooth!

In the absence of any other human remains identified in the 10 square meters of excavations in this location, such a scenario seems remote at best. There is, however, an extremely compelling

Figure 10. Clothing Items from TU 14. Top left, brass button with "PLATED" impression, FS 164; brass button, FS 170. Bottom, brass buckle tongues, FS 164 and FS 178.

Figure 11. Personal Items From TU 14. Limestone marble, FS 174; broken slate pencil, FS 170; human molar crown, FS 158.

reason to continue excavation in this area of the site: to determine the size and ultimate function of the hypothesized basement feature.

TU 15. This unit was situated so as to encompass a 2004 half-meter survey unit west of the excavated dormitory structure (Figures 3, 5). Brick debris was noted below the plow zone in this survey unit, leading to speculation that another structure was present in this general vicinity. Excavation of TU 15 in screened, 10-cm levels revealed a plow zone that was approximately 22 cm deep. Discovered at the bottom of this zone was a roughly oval feature of darker fill containing brick fragments and occasional chunks of limestone, presumably from foundation stones (Figure 12). Designated as Feature 30, it was initially interpreted as a chimney fall or a small root cellar. Since it extended into the east wall of the unit, the adjacent Unit 16 was opened, and the full extent of this feature was revealed. In addition, plow scars in the sterile matrix below the plow zone presented a cross-hatch appearance, indicating that plowing occurred in two directions that were at a right angle to each other (Figure 13). No other cultural features were noted in the eight square meters of area excavated in these two units, but the daily appearance of mole tunnels designed to bedevil the archaeologists were a common annoyance in TU 15.

Figure 12. Feature 30 in TU 15. Facing east; scale = 50 cm.

The form of Feature 30 can best be described as a rounded rectangle, or perhaps a squared oval. It measured about 155 cm north-south by 115 cm east-west. The bottom of the feature, illustrated in Figure 14, was basin-shaped, and extended barely 10 cm below the level of feature definition. This shape almost certainly rules out a fireplace function for this feature. On the other hand, if it is a root cellar, it is not associated with any other archaeological/architectural features. Perhaps there was a modest joist-on-stone-column frame structure in this area that the Feature 30 root cellar was associated with. Thanks to heavy plowing, as demonstrated

archaeologically by plow scars, evidence of such a structure would be nonexistent. Only the bottom portion of Feature 30 evaded the disruptive reach of the plow.

Figure 13. Feature 30 in TU 15/16. Perpendicular plow scars appear to the right of the feature in TU 16. Facing northwest; scale = 50 cm.

Figure 14. Bottom of Feature 30. Limestone fragments have been left *in situ*. A mole disturbance occurs on the south and north walls of the unit. Facing west; scale = 50 cm.

If some kind of structure that was centered on Feature 30 did exist, the artifact assemblages from TU 15 and TU 16 are not particularly indicative of what function it might have served. The same can be said for the scant artifacts associated with Feature 30 itself, which produced a combined total of just 1 ceramic (lead glazed earthenware), 5 glass and 4 cut nail fragments. Unlike the dormitory structure a few meters to the east, which contained hefty domestic and architectural-related assemblages, along with a variety of personal items, the combined artifact frequencies for TU 15 and 16 (including Feature 30) yielded far fewer artifacts, as indicated in Table 2. Artifact densities as measured by area excavated shows a similarly conspicuous difference. Ceramic and glass artifacts were generally twice as abundant in the dormitory area than around Feature 30. As for nails, the high relative density associated with Test Units 15 and 16 compared to the four test units to the east is attributable in part to the presence of wire nails (28.3% vs. 5.9%, respectively), which post-date the original Doak occupation. As shown in Figure 15, two bone button fragments and the blade of a small folding knife or razor were recovered from the plow zone of the two units.

The glazed brick fragment illustrated in Figure 16 was associated with Feature 30. This type of artifact is omnipresent at the site, with fragments recovered from virtually every context associated with a brick structure. While glazed bricks are often thought to be a fancy addition to fireplaces, the common occurrence of this type of artifact at the Doak Site raises the possibility that self-glazing occurred during the brick-making process. This example exhibits a heavy glaze on all three exterior surfaces.

Due to their small sample size, the MCD calculations for the two units may not be reliable. From 32 of 57 total sherds, TU 15 produced a date of 1851.8; the calculation for TU 16 was 1849.7 from 45 of 74 sherds. The combined MCD for both units was 1850.6, which is just

Figure 15. Personal Items From TU 15 and TU 16. Top left, bone button fragment, FS 161, right FS 159. Bottom, iron folding knife or razor blade fragment, FS 153.

Figure 16. Glazed Brick Corner Fragment From Feature 30. Glaze is present on an all three exterior surfaces.

over four years later than the combined MCD for Test Units 10 through 13. Probably more significant than this small-sample MCD difference is the presence of 78 wire nails from the plow zone of both 2005 units. Since this type of a fastener became common in the United States during the mid-1880s (according to Adams [2002]), their high frequencies in this area suggests that whatever structure was present here was constructed or at least repaired in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Conclusions

Over three consecutive field seasons that produced a considerable quantity of valuable and sometimes puzzling artifacts (nearly 17,000) and features (several dozen), the Doak Site has remained consistent in one respect: it never ceases to surprise. This truism proved to be apposite during 2005 in a number of respects. No limits to the presumed basement feature near the main house were defined, while at the same time there was nothing discovered to indicate that this feature postdates the earliest Doak occupation. Since 10 square meters of area has now been excavated without encountering a shred of evidence to the contrary, it can be assumed that this feature is early and in fact probably pre-dates the elaborate 1830 main house. Delineating the structure and form of this feature, and verifying its function, remain as enduring (and up to now exasperating) research objectives for the future. Once the south edge of this feature is identified, trenching just to the south of it can be attempted in order to search for remains of an adjacent road. If a remnant of the early road exists in the raised area in front of the manor, its archaeological signature may have been spared from the disruptive effects of plowing; at least no plow scars have been noted in the three units excavated in this area to date.

Feature 30, located west of the dormitory structure, is equally baffling but for different reasons. Although its archaeological visibility is clear, its archaeological focus (Deetz 1977) is anything but. Consisting of a shallow brick-filled pit that was virtually devoid of artifacts, the presence of limestone fragments scattered at the bottom of the feature suggest a possible architectural function, but a one-and-a-half-meter basin is hardly the kind of feature that would be associated with a pier foundation. The absence of any other foundations or post holes, indeed, of any other cultural feature at all in the surrounding eight square meters of excavated area, might indicate that this was a modest root cellar associated with an equally modest frame structure. It would have been cleaned out and then filled with brick debris, perhaps from a chimney, after the demise of the structure. Whatever its form and function, it appears to date somewhat later than the dormitory building.

Since there is no indication as to the presence of additional features (basin-shaped or otherwise) near Feature 30, let alone in what direction other features might be expected to appear, a recommendation to the sponsor concerning further excavation would be hollow advice indeed. Instead, it may be more productive to carefully monitor any ground-disturbing activities in this area of the site during future landscaping and/or construction by Tusculum College. Such monitoring should be carried out by a qualified historical archaeologist who is granted the unencumbered ability to temporarily suspend construction activities in order to record and excavate any significant features that he or she identifies.

Given the excavation history of this site, even archaeological monitoring can be expected to reveal intriguing remains. Such an effort will need to be approached with a flexible attitude and an open mind, that is, with the same qualities that Tusculum College has brought to this site over the last three years. The fascinating and historically significant home site of Samuel Witherspoon Doak deserves no less.

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Table 1. Artifact Counts for the Basement Feature, All Field Seasons.

	Test Unit 5 [a]	Test Unit 9	Test Unit 14
Ceramics	85 / 42.5 m^2	68 / 17.0 m^2	123 / 30.8 m^2
Glass	66 / 33.0 m^2	62 / 15.5 m^2	156 / 39 m^2
Nails	144 / 77.0 m^2	54 / 38.5 m^2	247 / 61.8 m^2
Lithics	234 / 117.0 m^2	539 / 134.8 m^2	690 / 172.5 m^2

[a] 1x 2 m unit.

Table 2. Artifact Counts and Densities in the Dormitory Area.

	Test Units 10-13[a]	Test Units 15-16
Ceramics	537 / 35.4 per m^2	131 / 16.4 per m^2
Glass	1338 / 88.3 per m^2	285 / 35.6 per m^2
Nails	492 / 32.5 per m^2 [b]	276 / 34.5 per m^2 [c]

[a] Excludes a previously excavated 1.30 x 0.65 m section of TU 13.

[b] Includes 29 wire nails.

[c] Includes 78 wire nails.